

PETER
in the
FIRE
LIGHT



WILLIAM
ALLEN
KNIGHT



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Anna B. Lawrence

Christmas

1912

PETER IN THE FIRELIGHT

BOOKS BY THE SAME AUTHOR

THE SONG OF OUR SYRIAN GUEST

THE LOVE WATCH

SAINT ABIGAIL OF THE PINES

THE SIGNS IN THE CHRISTMAS FIRE

THE SHEPHERD OF JEBEL NUR

NO ROOM IN THE INN

OUTSIDE A CITY WALL

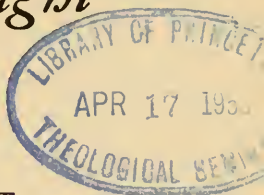
THE SONG OF OUR SYRIAN GUEST (WITH NOTES)

PETER IN THE FIRELIGHT



PETER STOOD IN THE LIGHT OF THE FIRE

Peter in the Firelight



BY
WILLIAM ALLEN KNIGHT ✓

AUTHOR OF "THE SONG OF OUR
SYRIAN GUEST," ETC.



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NORWOOD • MASS • U • S • A

To

FREDERICK E. EMRICH, D.D.

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I

*Memories of a Mountain
Lake*

“Now this lake of Genesareth · its waters are sweet and very agreeable for drinking · the lake is also pure, and on every side ends directly at the shores and at the sand · There are several kinds of fish in it different both to the taste and the sight from those elsewhere · The country also that lies over against this lake · its nature is wonderful as well as its beauty · one may call this place the ambition of nature.”

FLAVIUS JOSEPHUS
(Born 37 A.D.)

Peter in the Firelight

I

MEMORIES OF A MOUNTAIN LAKE

WHAT shall I write more?
Memories still throng my
head, this gray old head
which once — I ever hear the people
say it, speaking softly — once leaned
on Jesus' breast. And they will leave
the earth with me; for all who shared
them are gone — and I — I am John
the aged! Yet I know that this hand
cannot write all; my gospel is near
its end.

But why is my heart so wakened
by memories of Galilee? Is there
aught that He would have me write
yet more — He whose tenderness now
lays the old-time spell upon me?

Ah, now I bethink me, my Master!
There is one memory — one among
the many yet untold — which Thou,

PETER IN THE FIRELIGHT

as I know Thy heart, wouldst have live on earth forever. It is of that last firelight scene by the lake, and Peter.

How strange that none has told of that! They who are gone, the three who wrote of what our eyes beheld, all have told how we saw Peter in the night of his shame, when first he stood in the light of the fire. I myself have written of that, also. Alas, we are all so mindful of a brother's fall, so heedless of our Master's strong gentleness in saving!

But I will still be Peter's friend — I who gained admittance for him to the palace courtyard where that first fire was burning in the chill night. Yes, I will write one chapter more and finish the story; for two fires must shine in our gospel, and the same man stand in the light of both.

Fetch me the pen, good Polycarp. Ah, thou art listening with the bright face of youth! The light in thine

eyes minds me of the days when I, too, was young — in Galilee.

Come nearer, my son. He whose wrinkled hands will consecrate thee Bishop of Smyrna would talk with thee of his old friend ere he writes the last words. Hear thou the story of the fisherman who stood in the light of two fires — two, my son. It will make sweet sounds withal for thee and me, as when a rivulet runs down from silent hills.

I knew Peter from the beginning. How well do I remember those early days by the lake — our bright little sea which still lies deep in the hills of Galilee. My father was a fisherman there, and so was Peter. He had spent his days and nights on those waters from youth up.

When I was still scarce more than a lad he was known to gardeners and vineyard keepers and shepherds on all those shores, known even to the swineherds of the Gentiles along

the steep side of the east side. For his boat had often been within calling distance of the hills that rise round about everywhere. Our lake is but seven miles across where it is widest, barely thirteen in length, and it so narrows southward that men say its waters, often rippled and sounding in the breeze, look like a harp. So the fishers were wont to spread their nets for drying or mending anywhere on the white beaches.

Peter's bearded face was often seen, too, at the wharves of villages and little cities alongshore; for he was a man who did a thriving business as fishing goes. He had partners—at length the sons of Zebedee his fellow fisherman, my brother James and me, still quick and hot with youth. So I knew Peter well. Everyone did.

Even the Roman soldiers who manned the fortresses that threw long shadows on our waters knew him. For he was ever bold to

speaking his mind, and alien warders irked him sore.

His home was up the more flourishing west side, in the center of business northward; first in the village of fisherfolk called Bethsaida, or Fish-Home, then in our great town Capernaum. There his good wife, whom some called Perpetua, and her mother, kept his house, and watched for his coming when he had marketed his catch or wind and weather made him weary. Even our unresting brother Paul took thought of Perpetua, long after those days, when he spoke of a wife's comfort such as Peter had.

There was a daughter, too, in his home — a daughter, as every young fisher on the lake would remember at sight of him. I was a young fisher myself. Of her maiden beauty — but John the aged may not linger on the sweetness of a flower that faded so long ago; albeit the pleasant charms of youth

are surely of God, and I marvel to hear that men of these latter days are saying — what is it they say? — that the daughter's beauty troubled her father? Ah, they never knew Peter the fisherman as I did!

In such a life, lowly yet having many a charm withal, the years went by until Simon — so we called him then — was a weathered waterman in mid-life. Quick with tongue or hand was he, as everyone knew, headstrong, too, yet honest as the daylight, kind of heart and even humble in a strong man's way. Some feared him; some smiled at mention of him, but gave heed when he approached; we who were near him daily loved him. But his faults were hidden from none.

A day came when Simon went down the river below the lake. Being a man to take interest in matters beyond his daily toil, he wished to look upon certain gatherings far down the Jordan's rough

gorge, of which word had come even to our valley. He would hear for himself a voice that was crying in the wilderness. For there was disquiet in men's minds in those days — our gospel had its beginning in distresses of common life. Even we around our lake among the hills, where all things favored us, sometimes spoke hot words when the silence of tending the nets was ended.

“See yon glaring town!” said we, pointing to the hated city Tiberias, which Herod had quickly set up on our west shore where the graves of our dead once were, naming it for the foreign tyrant. “See those watching fortresses, and yonder castle above our own waters!” Affairs were going wrong in Israel.

Down the Jordan a man had appeared who dared to speak the thoughts of many hearts. He warned the tyrant's tax-gatherers for their extortion. He bade soldiers

beware of violence and plunder. He admonished proud dwellers in Jerusalem against hardness of heart — men of our own people who were lording it over the poor and needy. “He that hath two coats,” said he, “let him impart to him that hath none; and he that hath food, let him do likewise.” Best of all, he proclaimed a deliverer whose coming was near.

Simon the fisherman went down the river to hear a voice like that. We on the lake were of those who believed that the day of our God would come and his Messiah yet be seen among us. I had gone before Simon; for I was young and delayed not. And among the first words which I heard the man of the wilderness utter were these: “He that cometh after me is mightier than I; he will gather his wheat into the garner, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.” And I marveled greatly at those words.

II

The Coming of a Stranger

“The ideal life is in our blood, and never will be still . We feel the thing we ought to be beating beneath the thing we are . When we see Christ, it is as if a new live plant out of the southern soil were brought suddenly in among its poor, stunted, transplanted brethren, and, blossoming in their sight, interpreted to each of them the restlessness and discontent which was in each of their poor hearts.”

PHILLIPS BROOKS

II

THE COMING OF A STRANGER

HOW clear is the memory of a day in early spring when I saw Simon striding through the crowd! Was it sixty years ago?

For days before I had watched men coming from near and far. Even in that wilderness the river banks had been thronged until the grass and bushes were trampled in the moist ground. Back from the stream many a dim line of smoke was rising from smoldering fires built by groups of sojourners. I remember what pictures shone out in the dark around them each night.

By day we all gathered to hear a man who stood at the water's edge uttering bold words. He wore a rough camel's-hair covering bound by a leathern girdle; his food was wild honey and the meat of locusts

which leap in plenty on the rocky places and the sands thereabout. But his voice was sweet to troubled men like us, it was so brave and hopeful. And his name was John.

Some scoffed. But men who believed him true waded into the stream and received his baptism before all eyes in token of penitence. I was one of those who took this sign of a follower.

By and by a quiet stranger came through the crowd and stepped into the water. He, too, was young, and from Galilee, as all could see. We Galileans were somehow known at sight. But there was something in the presence of the newcomer that made men gaze. A hush fell on the multitude.

Presently, in the silence we heard John talking with the stranger. There seemed to be hesitation about baptizing him. We heard the unknown voice; it was calm and a marvel of sweetness. When it

ceased speaking, the stranger was baptized. And we knew by all we saw that the man of the wilderness had met his Master at last.

That night we slept in the open not far from the river's willows. Though it was early springtime the warm days had brought forth much grass and filled the air with the fragrance of numberless wildflowers. The cliffs that stand back from the river gave the valley not a little shelter from wind, but the nights were quickly cold and we wrapped our blankets close about us.

Before sleep came we heard some wild creature, surprised at sight of us in its prowling, start with a hoarse grunt and rush into the bushes. For a moment or two we could follow the way it took, listening to the sound of its crashing through the thicket and watching the shaking reeds in the moonlight. Then, while we lay awake, we talked of the stranger and longed for the morrow.

In the morning John spoke like a man who had found a great joy. "In the midst of you," said he, "standeth one whom ye know not, the latchet of whose shoe I am not worthy to unloose."

When the stranger appeared again, John saw him coming. Then he uttered marvelous words. I feel the thrill of that moment to this far hour; even now I hear the ring of gladness in his voice. "Behold," he cried, "behold, the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world!"

While we stood gazing and the stranger drew near, our happy master declared that this was he of whom he had told us. That was a great moment for us who had believed the man of the wilderness!

Simon's brother, Andrew, was there with me. The next day we two were standing near our master, being young and quick to love; and together we were watching the stranger. "Behold, the Lamb of

God!" said he, speaking as if to encourage what he saw in our hearts.

Then Andrew and I followed the stranger until he noticed us and bade us come with him. So we two were in his presence alone till that day closed.

What did he say to us then? Ah, I have told many memories, but the memory of those hours I have never tried to word. He himself, many times afterward, taught us to hold some things in the shelter of silence. Even so the springs that fill life's stream are kept unsullied.

Meanwhile Simon had come. Andrew soon found his brother and told him of our friend, the stranger. I knew what the good Andrew had done as soon as I caught sight of Simon. He was striding along beside his brother in his ever-headlong way. I watched the sight, for I loved this man and was eager to see what would happen, knowing him so well.

Andrew brought his brother to our friend. Simon stopped before him and stood wonderingly. I had never seen our Simon awed before any man until then. The Nazarene received his gaze in quiet; presently he smiled in a kind way which I had noticed before.

"Thou art Simon, the son of Jonas," his low voice sounded; "thou shalt be called *Petros*."

Now that word, in the language which we fishermen had learned from men who did business in the towns around our lake, means a *rock*. We knew not what to make of such a saying, knowing our changeful Simon so well; neither did Simon. He startled, then stood in silence with deeper wonder in his face. That was one of the few times in those days when we ever saw Simon hold his peace. He answered not a word.

At length he turned and walked aside. His head was bowed — a

noble head was Simon's! His face had a look as if he were musing, "I *am* Simon — and I *shall* be — *shall* be — a rock!"

Not long after, Simon was back with his boat. But, busy man that he always was, he ceased not to ponder that saying. For his heart was great with stirrings which answered to the strange words, though he knew not what they meant. At last he told Perpetua about it all. When he let me know of that, morning sunshine was lighting lake and hills all round our boats. What she said Simon kept as between man and wife. But his face was like our dear valley in its shining.

How strange that Perpetuas can ever be so hopeful!

III

Leaving the Nets

*“In simple trust like theirs who heard,
Beside the Syrian sea,
The gracious calling of the Lord,
Let us like them without a word
Rise up and follow Thee.”*

JOHN GREENLEAF WHITTIER

III

LEAVING THE NETS

SOON a day came that changed everything for us. We had gone out in the boats the night before as we were wont to do. I can see even now the boat-lamps flickering in the dark and the forms of toiling men; I remember how the morning star glittered and the gleam at daybreak. But for all our toiling we took nothing, and morning brought no cheer for us.

Simon was never ready to quit fishing with an empty boat, and though the sun was at last shining high above the hills of the Gadarene shore, he and Andrew were casting their net again, wearily trying their fisherman's luck once more. James and I, in the boat with our old father, were out of heart and had gone to mending our nets.

The landsfolk were all astir along-

shore. Presently we heard a voice call from the beach. All sounds carry far in the clear air over our lake shut in by the hills, and even a peasant's shout is turned to music. But there was such mellow quiet in the voice sounding across the water that we sat looking shoreward wondering who the man might be. We saw him beckon to Simon's boat, which was near the shore where a great spring pours into the lake and fish are apt to run in shoals.

"Come, follow me," we heard the voice call, "and I will make you fishers of men."

That was a strange word to hear on our waters. We watched Simon's boat. Straightway both men took in their net and started for shore. Then we saw them walking with the stranger along the beach. When they were opposite where our boat lay, the man called to us also, and Simon beckoned. It was easy to see that his eagerness was up and

as usual would brook no delay. We took oars and began to row in, looking over our shoulders as we went. For we marveled at Simon's beckoning still.

Before long I said to James, "Can it be He whom we saw down the river — the Man of Nazareth?" We had gone with him when he left the Jordan for a time, and he was ever in our hearts. James only pulled his oar with stronger stroke, still looking over his shoulder. When our boat touched shore and we left our father and waded to the beach.

It pleased us to watch how the Nazarene set his heart on Simon forthwith. Soon the people gathered about us to listen. He talked of the kingdom of heaven as John did, but there was no strain of words and no fevered tones were in his voice. He, too, bade us repent, but it was always because of God's care for us all and how blessed it is to live with that ruling our minds. His words

were so simple and near to our daily life that all who stopped to listen lingered. By and by they so pressed upon him that he could not be seen or even heard by the multitude. Then it was that he showed his discernment of Simon's worth.

I saw him turn once and again and look at our two boats. Presently he entered one of them. It was Simon's! He seemed to mind well whose boat it was, for his eyes scanned the crowd until they found Simon. "Put out a little from the land," said he; and his tone was as when a man speaks to a friend.

Simon quickly loosed the tether and pushed off. I heard them talking low together as the boat glided away from the beach. Simon took an oar and dropped down astern to hold the bow inshore. Then the Nazarene sat with a happy face and went on talking to the people.

How often I remembered that scene in the years which followed!

How often its quiet beauty seemed like some vision in a dream — our Simon holding his boat that the Master might be heard and seen! I recall even now that I chanced to catch sight of Perpetua's face in the crowd. It was all agleam with a wife's joy as she watched her Simon. But little did any of us think then that he was soon to do the like when the world should wait to hear that voice — the world instead of the little throng beside our lake! Yet, alas, there came many a time when Simon started up and rocked the boat not a little, before all was over!

Still, through all, the Nazarene never ceased to think fondly of him. That very day, as soon as he finished speaking to the people, he turned to Simon and asked him to put out into deep water and let down his nets for a draught. There was a ripple of pleasure along the beach at those words, for all who

knew Simon understood what a man he was for deep-water fishing. We heard him answer that he and his partners had been out all night and taken not a thing. "But," he went on, "at Thy word I will let down the nets." That was a wondrous thing for our Simon to say! I could scarce keep my delight silent.

Perpetua smiled in happy surprise at the sound of her husband's voice in such words; and Simon's daughter clapped her young hands for gladness as her father brought his boat about. James and I, being partners, took our boat and followed them.

There was a soft breeze blowing, I remember, and mid-day sunshine flooded the stillness that covered lake and hills. We knew that the Master's purpose had to do with Simon, so we lay off a little. We saw him cast the net. Then he stood waiting, watching.

Even to this day the sense of the

LEAVING THE NETS

silence on Galilee when nets had gone down and we waited, with the hills rising around our glistening waters, is sweet to me. But of all those memories none comes over the years like the silence when we watched Simon standing by his nets that day.

By and by we saw him move hurriedly along the boat, peering into the water; soon he began hauling up the net with even more eagerness than common. We could see that they had taken a great catch. Still holding the net taut, he beckoned to us. We quickly came alongside, and together we took in such a haul of fish that we were all amazed—even we who were used to those abounding waters.

Then Simon—ever a child at heart for all he was so manful—dropped on his knees among the fish and cried, “Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!”

How like him it was to do even

so! He was the most genuine of men; many a fault had he, but the grace to feel it as truly as any man could was always his, and he was ever foremost in honoring the faultless One!

The Master looked on the kneeling fisherman with such a light in his eyes as only love can make. "Fear not," said he; "from henceforth thou shalt catch men."

While we brought the laden boats to land, how our hearts burned within us! That was the end of our fishing for many a day.

But we did not miss our old employment or even think of it when weather signs were right for fishing, we were so taken up with the teacher from Nazareth. He seemed to know our daily life as well as we ourselves did, and unseen meanings showed out in common things to his eyes. We saw them at once when he spoke, though he talked of fishing and flocks, of grain

"FEAR NOT," SAID HE, "FROM HENCEFORTH THOU SHALT CATCH MEN"



LEAVING THE NETS

fields and flowers, and the simplest things of home life.

It was wonderful to hear him talk of God as our heavenly Father. He showed us the Father's ways in plain sight all about us.

Besides that, he had such pity for all sufferers and such strange power to relieve them by his voice or touch that he started a joy along that shore which no man had seen the like of before. We were happy men and thought no more of fishing.

Soon the Sabbath came. In the hush which it brought, there amid guarding hills, all were going through the sunshine in Capernaum's streets to the synagogue. Thither the Nazarene went also. Amid the throng was a man possessed who made a disturbance, crying out concerning our Master. He spoke to him and the man ceased his writhing, being healed. What a Sabbath that was in Capernaum!

But even such a day did not

cause the Master to cease thinking of Simon. When at last he left the multitude at the synagogue, to Simon's house he went.

Now Perpetua's mother was lying in a great fever. Soon they told the Master. He went where she lay and stood over her, touching her hand gently and speaking in tones strangely quieting. Before long the fever was gone, and she arose to minister to us with the good Perpetua.

But while the Sabbath sun was setting, the people gathered all round the door of Simon's house, bringing their sick and afflicted. I recall the scene as if it were yesterday, how the young prophet from Nazareth stood amid the throng, out in the evening light, laying his hand on one, speaking low and tender words to another, until the night closed around the mass of upraised faces and the stars were shining in the lake.

LEAVING THE NETS

The people of Capernaum slept that night with glowings of peace lighting their dreams. But in no house where loved ones freed from pain were sleeping was there gladness like that in Simon's; for the Master himself was sleeping there.

IV

*The Fisherman Comes to
His Own*

*“Jesus who · alone art benignant and not
haughty · alone a Saviour and just;
Thou who always seest what belongeth to
all · who with Thy gifts and Thy com-
passion coverest those that hope in Thee ·
who hast made our solitary and wild
nature salutary and reposeful · who didst
rescue me from the phantasy of the passing
moment and guard me unto that which
abideth forever!”*

ACTA JOHANNIS
(Second Century A.D.)

IV

THE FISHERMAN COMES TO HIS OWN

THE next morning when we came to Simon's house his guest had gone. I remember how empty the morning's beauty seemed as we said one to another, "He is not here." He had risen at daybreak, Simon told us, and had gone out alone. But Perpetua had watched the way he took, and soon her good man was leading us thither.

As we hurried westward along our north shore, the little plain of Gennesaret opened before us circling the lake with its flowering crescent. Beyond its bright expanse rose the highlands on the way to Nazareth. We were questioning whether he could have set out for his home. But when we neared the bluffs that wall the further side of the plain

behind Magdala, we saw him sitting in quiet on a lone slope.

Morning around our lake is a time of surpassing sweetness in the months of spring. The hills are covered with endless green and tinted with many hues by reason of the red soil showing out in plowed patches everywhere and numberless masses of wildflowers and many grazing flocks and herds. The lake lies nestled among the hills like a little child of the sky waking and watched by its mother. The air is of a fragrant pureness, and snowy Hermon lifts its glistening white form like some heavenly presence beholding our valley. We did not wonder that our Master, whose eyes could see beauty beyond our sight in common things, had sought a morning hour in quiet amid such charms.

But when we came near and looked upon his face, we saw that it shone with light fairer than the

morning's. We understood why it was so, needing no words; for he made us feel that God is light. Many a time afterward we saw his countenance shining with peaceful cheer when the day began, even as we beheld it for the first time that morning. Oh, my Master, I would see Thy face! Of all who followed Thee I only wait till Thou shalt call, and I shall see Thy face!

When he had received us with the welcome he always gave, "Let us go into the next towns," said he, "that I may tell good tidings there also." So we left our lake behind. And ever as we went our eyes were opened more and more to the Master's grace of word and life.

Time and again he returned to our home shore. He seemed to love the lakeside even as we ourselves did. I have never ceased to cherish the memory of the company from the lake which followed him when he went out thence.

It seemed strange at first that such as we should be together — fishermen, and a tax-gatherer from Capernaum whom we had hated, and the wife of Herod's steward from wicked Tiberias down the west shore, and Mary of Magdala, and the rest. But our love for the Master soon made us friends.

Strangest of all seemed the welcome he gave the women; for none had ever seen such trust in womanhood, such unfearing purity of attention. The world will more and more recall what he did for us men whom he made apostles of his love; but will it learn to understand what he did for those women from our lake? Will it open the paths of the spirit to women, as he did?

My own mother was one of those lakeside women who ministered to him wherever he went — Salome, name of what hallowed memory! And this they did to the last. For it was they who went to the tomb

with the spices which their hands had prepared for anointing his body. Ah, even so it was they who were first to hear the words, "He is risen."

Mary of Magdala was chief among these women. Even Joanna, though she was wife to the king's steward, did not equal her in the place she filled, so abounding was Mary's skill. Her townsfolk were rich in the things of this world because of the many fabrics there made and the dye-works by their crystal brooks. They prospered, too, by reason of their great traffic in turtle-doves and pigeons for the purification rites in the Temple at Jerusalem. So Mary had means and acquaintance even about the Holy City itself as none other had; and these she used in the service of the Master, the wealth of womanhood in her breast yielding love that was wonderful. For she had been grievously afflicted and he had set her free. Alas that men should think of impurity when they speak the name

of such a woman as Mary Magdalene!

Yet, loving us all as he did, Simon was ever foremost in our Master's hopes concerning us. He was sure to see his faults even with quicker sight than we who knew them so well; and he never spared rebuke. But he seemed always to see the rock-nature in him, never losing his confidence that it would show out at last from all the surging.

It comes back to me now, that night of the storm on the lake and Simon's adventure — comes as if it were of yesternight when I woke and heard yonder Ægean sea-roar. No man had been stancher than he in handling the boat to ride out the gale. He had taken command and his courage kept us afloat. When we saw the form on the waters, every man clung to his hold on the plunging craft, peering into the dark and harking to the voice.

Suddenly we heard Simon call

out above the roar, "Lord, if it be Thou, bid me come to Thee upon the water."

We knew how like him it was to think of such a thing; yet we watched amazed. Would he do it — would even he step out on those black billows! And what would the Master say to such daring?

Through the booming dark we heard one word — only one word. It was, "Come."

Never before had I seen Simon's erring strength so bared to all eyes as then. He set his foot over the boat's side with a gleam of joy in his face. Not another man aboard could have done it. The Master's word was enough to open a path anywhere, through any peril, for Simon.

Therefore was he our pathfinder. Oh, it was he who at last left our Jerusalem church behind, as he let go his hold on the boat that night, and dared to tread our Jewish prejudice, obeying the voice from heaven,

that he might carry the gospel into Gentile darkness!

Dear is thy memory, friend of long ago! Sweet is it to recall thy ever-sounding voice that could always say before any hardship for our spirits, "At Thy word I will," as thou didst at the first. Because of thee, John the aged is here beside this mighty Ephesus of the Gentiles these many years. Nay, rather, it is because our Master saw thy worth when we were naught but fishers on a lake hid in the hills.

Long after the night of the storm we talked of Simon's adventure; some even jested about the plight into which he came; for in truth he made a spectacle in the water which fishermen could scarce be expected to recall without mirth. But as days went on Simon began to make good the hopes of the Master concerning him, and at length none jested any more.

Many began to turn away in the

days that followed. I remember what sadness was in our young Master's face when he was left alone with the little group which he had chosen for his own. The people had forgot his deeds of kindness; they heeded not the voice that once had charmed them. We stood a band of silent men. The Master was looking off over the lake.

"Will ye also go away?" said he at length.

Simon answered, "Master, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life." In his own hearty way he went on, "And we have believed and know that Thou art the Holy One of God."

What cared we for the vanishing of the crowd after that! Gloom lifted. A light as of sunshine came in the Master's eyes. But even as we watched it, being glad at the sight, we saw it fade away as he said, "Did not I choose you the twelve, and one of you is a devil?"

“One of us?” said we; “one of us?” It was the first mention of the horror we were to face together, and we knew not what to make of such a saying.

As days went on Judas carried the bag; he was the only man among us from Judea, and we Galileans committed to him the common store to provide for us all, because he seemed a man to be trusted by reason of his steadfast ways. But Simon it was, Simon whose faults were open to all eyes, who continued to draw from the treasury of our common devotion and utter the words that gladdened all hearts.

Little did we think that a night was coming when we should see these two men fall together — fall in the light of torches and a watch-fire!

Soon a day of triumph came for Simon, and the Master rejoiced in him as never before. We had been journeying until every man was

weary, going into the hills of the north; for the Master was so burdened in spirit that he was withdrawing himself from the cities of Galilee. At last he stopped to rest and we gathered round him.

“Who do men say that I am?” he asked.

We told him how, when the people were thronging us, we had heard them say that he was Elijah or one of the great prophets. Then his countenance brightened as with fond expectancy.

“But who say ye that I am?” he said, harkening for our answer.

It was Simon’s voice that broke the silence. “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God!” said he. There was something wondrously stirring in the way he spoke it. His voice was joyous and unafraid; his head was upraised as when a man’s soul awakes; and the simple words seemed to thrill with secret melody like a song that lingers in men’s hearts.

Never can I forget the radiance we saw then in Jesus' face. "Blessed art thou, Simon, son of Jonas!" he cried. Such a gladness was in his voice as we had not heard for many days. He seemed to see his hope fulfilled. He declared that flesh and blood had not made this known to Simon, but his own Father in heaven. "And I also say unto thee," he went on exultingly, "that thou art Peter!" — a rock, as at first he had declared he should be called.

We had never seen his joy so overflowing. He said that he would build his church on the rock that was showing out in Peter, though he had not so much as spoken of setting up a church before; and he declared that the powers of destruction should not prevail against it. He even promised that he would give the keys of the kingdom to Peter, and in heaven he would be trusted to lock or unlock its doors on earth. The Master's joy was wonderful.

So we saw our Simon come to his own. And we men of Galilee were full of cheer because of him. But I chanced to look upon the man from Judea, and I remember that on his face I thought I saw a sneer. Yet I heeded it not amid the gladness which Simon had made that day.

V

A Vision Glorious

*“At the time of Jesus heaven was not shut
nor the earth grown cold . The cloud still
opened above the Son of Man; the angels
ascended and descended upon his head;
visions of the kingdom of God were re-
ported everywhere, for the reason that man
carried them in his heart.”*

ERNEST RENAN

V

A VISION GLORIOUS

SIMON'S heart was all aglow because of the Master's praise. We began to call him Peter, and this pleased him not a little. He was blithesome and resolute as he moved among us. He bore himself as when a man is inwardly saying, "No more of this heaviness of heart!"

But before long the Master began to talk with us. He seemed to have some grave matter on his mind. At last we saw why his spirit was burdened. He must go up to Jerusalem, he told us, and there he must suffer many things — and be killed — and be buried — and rise from the dead! The way he spoke that word *must* amazed us.

Peter could not silence his heart's outcry against all this. He took the Master aside, and I heard him say,

“Never, Master, this shall never be done unto Thee!”

But alas for Peter! I saw the face of Jesus darken; a look of pain was in his eyes, and the voice but lately so jubilant uttered words that hushed even Peter. “Get thee behind me, Satan!” broke from his lips. As if recalling the very words spoken in Peter’s praise, he went on, “Thou art a stumbling block unto me” — still a rock, but now a rock in the way — “for thou mindest not the things of God, but the things of men.” This to the man who had just spoken what flesh and blood had not made known, but the Father in heaven! So did the Master’s rebuke quench each glowing word of the blessing as when a fire of coals is covered with ashes.

A week went by — a week of bewilderment and sorrowful foreboding. But soon we saw that even such a rebuke had not turned the Master from loving thoughtfulness for Peter.

A VISION GLORIOUS

One day, when the people of the north were gathered round us, he called Peter to him — Peter and James and me, the same three as before. And he bade us follow him.

The mountains of the north country rose to snow-covered heights around us. He was ever fond of hills and often sought them when high thoughts were upon him or the desire for prayer. So we followed him up the mountain's side, understanding our Master's way. We could see the people down on the plain where the rest of our band were left behind. But still he led us on. And as we climbed the height a wondrous view opened before our eyes in the sunshine.

Northward, ranges of towering peaks stood against the sky like watchers in silent majesty. Westward gleamed the great sea stretching along the whole length of the land of Israel; amid its brightness we saw the ships of other nations

moving in far silence. And outlined against the shining sea rose the long ridge of Carmel hallowed in our eyes by the ancient conflict on its top between the gods of other nations and our own God on whom Elijah called. Far to the south we beheld the hills of Israel, fair as the garden of the Lord in their bountiful verdure, stretching away to the Holy City, whither the tribes from of old had gone up to worship.

In the near foreground, encircled by such manifold grandeur, outspread the loveliness of Galilee — the many-colored plain walled from the sea by long Carmel, the group of hills rising therefrom and holding Nazareth our Master's home, the rounded comeliness of tall Tabor upraised near them like a guardian. And a little way eastward from the Nazareth hills, deep among another group of high slopes, we saw the waters of our own lake, dotted with fishing boats, radiant with hues

A VISION GLORIOUS

of the hillsides around, and flashing in the sunlight. To crown all, Hermon lifted his lustrous height against the sky behind us, mantled with snow and beaming, as it were, a silent benediction.

In the still clearness of the mountainside the Master withdrew even from us at times. He seemed to have found at last such a retreat as his spirit craved, and gave himself over to meditation and prayer.

So the day passed, until the setting sun, lingering on the skyline of Carmel's ridge, threw its deeper radiance on all, and the mountains, the sea, the beauteous land, were covered with splendor as if heaven were opened. Oh, then we seemed to hear all things uplift a secret voice, crying, *Glory!*

We turned to look on the Master. In the holiness of evening time we saw him standing — watching while Galilee and all the hills, the sea and the mountains faded from sight.

Then the stars shone out on high and moonlight covered us on the height.

At length, being wearied, our eyes became heavy with sleep. Amid the untroubled gleaming, lo, we saw the Master's presence shining with brightness exceeding pure, above the whiteness of Hermon's snow and the dazzling of that day's sunlight. And in the silence we heard voices — voices of Elijah and Moses, the greatest of those whom we had named when the Master asked who the people thought he was. And as we listened we heard them talking — talking with him — talking of his decease which he was to accomplish at Jerusalem!

When we were fully awake we perceived that we had seen a vision, and great trembling came upon us; for we knew that what the Master had said unto us of his sufferings was understood in heaven!

Then Peter, when he saw that he had withstood the Master in

A VISION GLORIOUS

matters too great for him, lifted his ever undaunted voice. "Master," he cried, "it is good for us to be here; if Thou wilt, I will build three tabernacles!" For the night air on the mountain was cold.

But even while his words sounded through the moonlight, a passing cloud touched the steep and overshadowed us; and out of the cloud we heard a voice say, "This is my beloved Son; hear ye Him." This silenced Peter; and he, too, fell on his face, being sore afraid, as James and I were. When the cloud had passed by, we lifted our eyes to look around, and we saw no one any more save Jesus only.

While the moon's soft beaming covered the mountainside we slept. And in my dreams visions of sorrow rose and hovered in sight, then passed away in marvelous shining. Suddenly I woke, and it was morning.

Down to the ways of men we

passed — down through the fragrances of summer and the sound of the voices of birds — down to the Master's blessed ministries to the afflicted, and the mystery of his own suffering. Soon we started southward; and well we knew that his face was steadfastly set to go unto Jerusalem.

As we journeyed on to the Holy City, and back to Galilee once more, and then to Jerusalem for the last time, the Master told us yet more of what awaited him when his time should come. But even Peter held his peace now.

Once when we were in our own city, he was inquired of as the chief man among us by them that received the Temple tax, and Peter answered as with authority. Again, when the Master was talking of forgiveness, he said, "Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him? until seven times?" But the Master replied,

“Until seventy times seven.” Still, for the most part, Peter held his peace, being perplexed.

But as we were drawing near to Jerusalem for the last time, he uttered his thoughts once more. The Master saw a rich young ruler turn away from him and said, “How hardly shall they that have riches enter the kingdom of heaven.” Then Peter said, “Lo, we have left our all to follow Thee.” Jesus looked upon him with tender quietness and answered, “No man hath left house or wife or brethren or parents or children, for the kingdom of God’s sake, who shall not receive manifold more in this time and in the world to come eternal life.”

Then I saw how like an open book to our Master was the heart of Peter; for I knew that he was thinking of his home by the lake and of the good Perpetua and her mother and the beautiful daughter.

VI

*The Night of the Court-
yard Fire*

*“Two sayings of the Holy Scriptures beat
Like pulses in the church’s brow and breast;
And by them we find rest in our unrest.*

*The first is, Jesus wept, whereon is prest
Full many a sobbing face that drops its best
And sweetest waters on the record sweet;
And one is where the Christ, denied and
scorned,*

*Looked upon Peter. Oh, to render plain,
By help of having loved a little, and mourned,
That look of sovran love and sovran pain.”*

ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING

VI

THE NIGHT OF THE COURTYARD FIRE

SWEET it is to recall the home in Bethany whither Jesus led us. It was Mary Magdalene, I have always thought, who first brought about the welcome there which gave him solace at the last. The booths where Magdala's turtle doves and pigeons were sold for the Temple rites stood on Mount Olivet near Bethany; and Mary of all our band was the one who would have acquaintance in such a household and the womanly grace to make a place therein for him.

Olivet's eastward slope, where the village lay, had the charm of peace from the nature of the place. Hidden away from the near city by the mount itself, its quiet was guarded by the spreading tops of tall palms, and many a restful nook was there

in the shade of the low olive trees. Countless flowers brightened every path on the slopes around the little town. But naught in the spell of beauty there was equal to this, that through its sunlit air Bethany looked off over billowy hills and silent gorges upon a dreamlike void, blue tinted and touched with mystery; for the Dead Sea lies far below and beyond rise the mountains of Moab.

Yet dearer to our Master than all these charms was that Bethany home. He seemed to find such rest there as no other earthly dwelling gave. I marveled at this in those days. But now — now I know why it was so. It brought to mind his home in heaven! For God is love.

Morning after morning he went thence over Olivet into the city, but at each day's close we followed him out to Bethany again. I remember how the sunset light made the Holy City gleam as we looked back from

THE COURTYARD FIRE

the top of Olivet. This would leave a spell on my young spirit that haunted my dreams in Bethany's still nights. I knew not how to believe that such a one as he was to be killed amid that city's ancient glory. Sometimes I woke; silence covered all. And the stars kept watch!

Soon a day came when we did not go into the city. We saw the Master out on the hillsides among the trees. Oh, the hush that came in our hearts that day! It was near the time of the Passover feast and singing bands of pilgrims were going by. Yet we lingered in Bethany.

The next day he called two of us aside. And one was Peter! I was the other. He looked upon us as if pondering memories. I saw him glance toward Judas ere he spoke. Then he bade us go into the city, telling us that a man bearing an earthen water jar would meet us. He said that we were to follow him into the house he entered.

“And ye shall say unto the good man of the house,” he went on, “The Master saith unto thee, Where is the guest chamber where I shall eat the Passover with my disciples?” We saw that he was sending us to a secret friend who would understand; and Peter turned glad eyes toward me, pleased that we were trusted in such a matter.

“He will show you a large upper room furnished; there make ready,” were his parting words.

Then we two set off over Olivet; and Peter, being older, could scarce keep pace with my lithe steps. But I remember that as we talked on the way his love and grief poured forth in fuller flow than mine, while he rejoiced that the Master confided in him still.

Stay, memories of all that followed! Cease your sorrowful surging! My words must be only of Peter now.

When evening time came and

we were all gathered in the upper room, he and I reclined next to the Master. By and by we heard him sighing, "One of you shall betray me!" All around the table one man after another asked in astonishment, "Is it I, Master?"

I saw quick wrath in Peter's face. He nodded and signed earnestly for me to learn who it was that should do such a deed; for I was nearest and the Master was always strangely gentle toward me. I thought then, and often through the years it has broken in on my musing of that night in the upper room, that Peter would have throttled the traitor for love of the Master if he had been made known.

Then it was that my head was leaned against that pulsing Breast! And to me only, in words scarce more than breathed, he said, "He it is for whom I dip the sop and give it to him."

Saviour, I held my peace, keeping

Thy guard of mercy, when I saw
Thee reach Thy hand to the dish
and give the sop to Judas! I did
not betray Thee by so much as a
glance at Peter! And none knew
who it was when Judas went out
into the night.

How swiftly passed the hours —
how hushed that upper room! The
lamps flared in the breeze blowing
in from the outer dark, while one
dear voice sounded on. Once the
Master ceased speaking, and girding
himself with a towel, he went around
our circle giving us the ancient
token of hospitality — washing our
feet with gentle hands. And he
admonished us that we were to be
like him and serve one another with
lowly spirits.

But Peter could not restrain his
tender grieving. "Never, never!"
said he, drawing his feet away when
the Master came to him. But soon,
after calm words from Jesus, he
exclaimed, "Master, not my feet

only, but my hands and my head!" And the sad face brightened at Peter's sudden eagerness.

So it was time and again while the night wore away. Peter was evermore so headlong yet whole-hearted. At length, when the Master had been talking long, as if seeking to give us all that was in his heart and knowing that the hour of parting was near, he paused. "Simon," said he — for he called him by the old name to the last — "Simon, behold Satan asked to have you, my followers, that he might sift you as wheat; but I have made supplication for thee, Simon, that thy faith fail not." Then while all harkened, wondering at his warning voice, he said, "And do thou, when once thou hast turned again, stablish thy brethren."

We knew from his tone that some dread experience was ahead for Peter. It was pitiful to watch him. He upraised himself with a look of dismay. He declared that he would go

anywhere with the Master. "Why can not I follow Thee now?" he asked, perplexed and impatient, "I will lay down my life for Thee."

Jesus looked upon him fondly, yet with a kindling in his eyes that hushed all voices. "Wilt thou lay down thy life for me?" he answered. Then he called him by the new name — it was the only time we ever heard him do that — and said, "I say unto thee, Peter, the cock shall not crow this day until thou shalt thrice deny that thou knowest me."

How I grieved for Peter then! I could not believe that he would do it, the man whose love was like a bright flame — could not believe that his waywardness would come to that, though the Master spoke the words. But he knew what was in man — knew Peter better than I.

Peter, silent and anguished, could not be still. Once he arose and for a time stood by an open casement gazing into the dark. Then he

came back to our group and stood listening.

It was then that Jesus spoke those words beginning, "Let not your heart be troubled." I marvel not that the brethren hold them exceeding precious. But if they would find their inmost beauty, they must remember Peter! Would they see the mark giving token of his share in those words? I who remember when they were uttered give it for all troubled hearts.

Only a little before Peter had asked, "Lord, whither goest Thou?" See how the Master was mindful of the breaking heart when he went on, "In my Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so I would have told you; *for I go to prepare a place for you.* And if I go and prepare a place for you, I come again and will receive you unto myself, that where I am, there ye may be also." He was answering Peter's question! And having uttered that

golden promise, to make sure that it found even Peter's grieving breast, he repeated the very words of his question. "And whither I go," said he, "ye know the way."

So he showed his lovingkindness while the night hours hushed the noises of the city and his voice stilled our hearts.

Peter did not join his voice with ours when at last we sang the ancient hymn of parting. But when we passed out into the night, I saw him grasp one of the two swords which we Galileans were still wont to carry. And he gave me a look that seemed to recall old times together, as if he would say, "It shall not be, John! I will fight to the death!"

Silently we made our way through the city and down the hill below the Temple wall. Silently we crossed the bridge where the little Kidron's bed lay deep in the valley. Olivet rose before us, and Bethany was

in the stillness beyond. Would the Master return thither?

There was a garden at the foot of Olivet — a garden where we had often stopped as we followed that road with him; and he led us therein. Moonlight shone on all around and he seemed to covet shelter from its shining.

In the shadow of the trees he stopped. Then he beckoned to Peter — yes, to Peter! — and to James and me, the same three as oft before. We followed him apart from the others.

“Watch with me,” he said. Then he went a little way even from us, and we saw him fall to the ground. We heard his voice — he was praying!

So worn were we, so long did he linger, that sleep overcame us. We were awakened at length by his return, and we heard him saying, “Simon, couldest thou not watch with me one hour?” Tenderly he

bade us watch and pray lest we fall into temptation. "The spirit is willing," said he, "but the flesh is weak." Never was compassion like his!

At last he came to us once more and roused us with the words, "Arise, let us be going; behold, he that betrayeth me is at hand." Springing up we looked around. There was a light glimmering through the trees — a band of men with torches had entered the garden. They came toward us. And we saw Judas leading them!

When they had come near, the Master faced them, talking calmly unto them. They waited, standing in sudden awe. Then Judas stepped forth. "Hail, Rabbi!" said he. And he kissed the Master.

While Jesus spoke — oh, how gentle was his voice! — suddenly a sword flashed in the torchlight. I saw Peter leap forward, his strong arm waving the sword above the

THE COURTYARD FIRE

crowd, his eyes gleaming with fury — saw him strike with all his might. What cared he for the rush of numbers which would surely crush him in a moment! He was ready to die with the Master, as he had said. And he would show it. He was Simon Peter to the death!

And Judas — ah, he crouched in the crowd, and Peter's blow fell on a servant of the High Priest.

Often have I wondered in the years since then what might have come to pass but for the calm and the power of Jesus. Perchance, because of Peter, our gospel's highest reach of beauty, its mystery of blessing in the story of the Cross, would have vanished in a midnight rush of angered soldiers! But Jesus spoke; with his lifted hand he stilled the outcry and mastered all. Sternly he commanded Peter to put up his sword. "All they that take the sword shall perish with the sword," said he. While we stood amazed at

his power, in the silence all heard him say, "Thinkest thou that I cannot beseech my Father, and He shall even now send me twelve legions of angels?" — a legion for every man of our group, counting himself with us.

While Peter dropped his puny sword into its scabbard, Jesus said to him, "The cup which the Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?"

Then the band bound him and led him away. Back across the bridge they took him, back up the hillside road and into the city. We fishermen from Galilee—they left us scattered in the valley.

In the moonlight I saw the smoking torches flaming over the crowd and him as they passed within the walls. That sight was too much for me. I ran up the steep road and followed them. When I saw them entering the doorway leading to the courtyard of the High Priest's palace, I even followed them therein.

THE COURTYARD FIRE

Before long, in the dark outside the door, I saw Peter. I well knew what reason he had for staying outside. Had he not set all the servants of that very place in a rage against him by attacking one of their number? But having acquaintance there, since I was myself of the priestly kin, I spoke to the portress and brought in Peter.

But she — ah, naught that I could say silenced her tongue! Peter became wrathful and wary. He would not go with me where they were questioning Jesus within the house.

A fire of coals had been kindled in the open court, for the spring night was cold; and Peter would do naught else but stop and stay in the group of serving people and soldiers gathered there. So he stood warming himself. I saw his bearded face lit up by the fire's light — saw his sinewy hands spread in its red glow.

That scene, that picture in fire-

light, is one of the saddest in my memory — the rugged fisherman who all his life had cared nothing for cold or wet, the hardiest man among us, hovering over a little fire and shivering! I knew well what it meant, knew why the poor fellow was cold. It was not fear; he was the bravest of men. When the chill of despair is in the heart, the strongest warm themselves in vain.

Why should the Master's bright life go out in death? Peter's manhood cried out against that mystery. His was the folly of many a man since then; for the cross is oftentimes foolishness and a stumbling block to the strong unto this day, as our brother Paul has declared. No; Peter was the last man to be afraid.

I heard the taunting voice of the door maid cry out, "This man was also with him." I saw her point at Peter — saw the leering eyes of the

THE COURTYARD FIRE

men around the fire turned upon him. He rubbed his rough hands together over the embers, as if he were perishing with cold; and I heard him say in a low voice, "Woman, I know not the man."

Ah, it was half true! He felt that, in truth, he did not know the Master, did not understand why such a one as he would give himself up to die. Peter was ever fond of suiting words to his thoughts, and then, as I often heard him do, he said what he felt — "I know not the man." All that followed began in the bewilderment of love and the self-will of strength. I knew Peter well!

Soon I saw him leave the fire and walk toward the doorway. He seemed unable to endure the agony of being there, and I thought he was departing.

Then I heard another maid servant call, "This man also was with the Nazarene!" and I saw Peter

turn. He was ever quickly nettled by a woman's tongue, and I heard him utter an oath which we used to hear among the fishermen. Then his former words came out once more, "I know not the man." Hearing the men around the fire rail at him, being set on by the women, he strode back and stood in the light of the fire cursing them in unfearing rage.

They were treating the Master shamefully within; but I grieved more for what I saw and heard out in the courtyard than for all that his foes did. For the noblest friend of Jesus had broken down there and was denying him now outright!

I heard the soldiers crying merrily that Peter's speech betrayed him for a Galilean. They liked nothing better than to hector men of our country. I recalled how I had heard Peter bandy words with them when our boats lay off their fortresses by the lake. And this he did with-

"WOMAN, I KNOW NOT THE MAN"



THE COURTYARD FIRE

out flinching even around the court fire. So a terrible hour went by; and all the while they were heaping reproach on the Master within, and Peter stood in the light of the fire warming himself.

At last a kinsman of the servant whom he struck with his sword came and said before them all, "Did not I see thee in the garden?" But Peter, being undone, even denied what every man around him knew to be true. Soldiers and servants raised a wild burst of raillery at that. And when their uproar ceased, through the dark a cock's crowing sounded over the housetops.

I saw the Master turn and look upon Peter. And he, hearing the sound, remembered; and quickly he turned toward the place where Jesus stood among his foes. The sight of the Master's pallid face and gazing eyes broke Peter's heart. His head dropped for shame. I saw tears glistening on his beard

PETER IN THE FIRELIGHT

in the firelight. He turned away, and, staggering like a drunken man, he disappeared in the dark outside the courtyard door.

VII

The Fire on the Beach

“And so we take our leave of thee, thou generous, impulsive, wayward, impetuous, yet true-hearted man of God · We have come to know ourselves better through our acquaintance with thee, and even thy backsliding has shown us new depths of mercy in the heart of Christ · So, being converted, thou hast strengthened thy brethren, and we glorify God in thee.”

WILLIAM M. TAYLOR

VII

THE FIRE ON THE BEACH

WHEN at last our Master lay in the tomb and evening was darkening to another night, a longing seized me to find Peter.

It seemed like a dire dream, haunting that day of horrors and starting fresh anguish at its close — that such a man as he, my friend from youth up, had gone down in wreck as I saw him the night before, and now was grieving his heart away somewhere in Jerusalem as the darkness gathered once more.

I did what I could to comfort the mother whom her Son had committed unto my care, and the trust was precious. But all the while my thoughts were of Peter. For the Master's sufferings were ended, and the blessed Mary had the balm of heaven's peace; but Peter was living

still! And I knew that hell's torture was upon him. What is any grief to the pangs of a noble breast when its love is wrecked by its own falseness!

At length Mary slept. Then I stole out into the city's streets. Perchance I might find Peter.

Only the night before, through those same ways our little band of men from Galilee had followed the Master. Peter was with us then, his sword rattling as he strode, his bearing how brave! All were scattered now, I knew not where. Jesus was in his grave. And Peter — where was he?

I came to a pillar of stone at a street's turning, the very one beside which I saw him stop to tighten his sword belt. My heart was nigh to bursting as I stood there, laying my hands on the waymark and thinking of the vanished band and the Master we loved — and Peter. I tried to pray. Looking heavenward, I saw

THE FIRE ON THE BEACH

the stars above the city's darkness
glistening through my tears.

The Sabbath morning covered
Jerusalem with serene radiance; and
the light I saw in the holy mother's
eyes was as when shadows flee away.
For heaven was open unto her sweet
breast.

When the gates were unbarred I
went outside the city walls. The
crosses were still standing on the
little hill, and I was fain to linger
there. Oh, could it be that such a
scene in the light of Israel's Sabbath
was the end of it all — all the joys,
all the hopes we had known with
Jesus!

But not alone because of the
wooing awe of that sight did I
linger. Knowing Peter as I did,
my heart kept saying, "He will be
sure to come hither also."

I saw a group of priests and
Pharisees with a band of soldiers
come out at the gate by the Temple.
They hastened past the mound

whereon were the crosses, pointing and talking as they went — hastened on to the garden below its slope. I saw them put a seal upon the stone rolled against the door of our Master's tomb. Then they set a watch of soldiers, and the priests and Pharisees in their sacred robes hurried back into the city.

Before long, as I looked round about, I saw a man standing in the shadow of the wall. At times he fixed his gaze on the crosses, but again and again he turned away. I knew that it was Peter!

When he heard my footsteps and perceived that it was I, he started up and hastened to depart. But I ran and threw my arms about him; and being dumb with grief, I clung to him and kissed him. His sobs and trembling shook me while he hid his face.

At length I tried to speak. I uttered his name — but ah, I knew not what to say! To condone sin

there, beside that hill, was impossible.

By and by he lifted his face and gazed at the Cross. And then—he began to move toward it. I kept my arms around him, but I spoke not. Up the little hill we went; and when we came to its top, Peter fell on his face before the Cross.

We spent that Sabbath day together. Sacred were our communings through its hours. I remember how, as we recalled many a memory and talked of our Master's way with us, I told what John said of him who should come, before we saw him the first time by the Jordan. "John told us," said I, "that he would gather his wheat into the garner, and the chaff he would burn with unquenchable fire."

Peter startled and lifted his head with the old-time eagerness. "Did he say that?" he exclaimed. Then, musing for a time, he murmured, "Say that again."

“And Peter,” I went on, “I thought of those words when the Master told you that Satan had asked to have us. Did he not say, ‘That he might sift you as wheat’? Though the chaff be burned with fire, the wheat — the wheat, Peter — the Master would gather into the garner! He saw the wheat that would remain, for he bade you, when once you had turned again, to stablish your brethren.”

“The wheat!” said Peter, pondering.

So the Sabbath went by.

Early the next morning, while it was yet dark, Peter and I were aroused by a woman’s voice calling our names without. It was Mary Magdalene. She was breathless with running. “They have taken away the Lord out of the tomb, and we know not where they have laid him!” she cried with quivering lips. Her face was ashen white; her bountiful black hair mantling

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her shoulders revealed her womanly despair.

We ran both together, and I, being the younger, outran Peter; but he it was who first made bold to enter the tomb. So began that day of glad surprise. Day of what blessed mystery, what unspeakable joy!

When the evening had come ten of our band gathered, the doors being shut for fear of the Jews. Hearts beat fast as one report after another was told, how certain of our company had seen the Master alive again. But no tale of joy gave such delight as when Peter stood among us and declared that he, too, had been with him. That he should find Peter, after that scene by the fire three nights before — this was the surest token that it was the Master indeed. Who but Jesus would keep Peter in loving remembrance after such shame!

When two men came hurrying in

and told how he had walked with them on the Emmaus road and was known in the breaking of bread, "The Lord is risen indeed," we answered, "and hath appeared unto Simon." This was the crowning wonder of all that came to our ears. For what token that Jesus who was dead is alive forevermore can equal the mercies he shows to sinning men who suffer, being penitent!

Before we parted that night he came and stood in our midst. But we were affrighted, supposing that we saw a spirit. "Peace be unto you," he said, and he sought to give us proof that it was he himself.

All through the week that followed we talked of him; and some disbelieved, so hard was it for us to realize that our Master was not dead but living and making himself known unto us! And when it was once more the first day of the week, again he stood among us, showing his wounded hands and feet as before.

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But the Lord had a yet more blessed token in store for us. In the night of the upper room he had told us that after he was raised up he would go before us into Galilee. In our bewilderment we did not see the sweet meaning of that saying. But the women who saw the angel at the tomb heard him say, "Lo, he goeth before you into Galilee"; and when they met the Lord himself in the way, he, too, said unto them, "Go tell my brethren that they depart into Galilee." Then we began to understand! But it was long afterward that I saw the full beauty of this thrice repeated message. Not only in Jerusalem and on the Lord's Day when we were gathered together would he be known unto us; but the chief grace of our risen Master was to make himself known also in common life, amidst week-day scenes, in places of toil — yes, in Galilee!

When at last this message found

our hearts through the words of the women, Peter could not restrain his eagerness to set off for the lake. Seven hurrying men were we, all through the hills and valleys on the way thither.

Perpetua received us into her home with a wife's joy. Her goodness comforted Peter, and her kind silence before us about his fall was like a refuge for him. Yet I saw that his heart was restless still.

One day he said, "I go a fishing." We knew how it would ease his troubled thoughts to get back to the nets and hear the water rippling round the boat as of old; besides that, a good catch would provide food for us. "We also come with thee," said we all.

But though we stayed on the lake all night, we took nothing. Peter was restless still and could not steady his mind and be quiet as a fisherman has need of doing, and the nets were ill handled so that we missed our cast

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time and again. And withal the run of fish was not good. .

At last day was now breaking. Our boat lay inshore and we were out of heart. Oh, then came a glad surprise!

In the dim light we saw a form standing on the beach. We knew not who it was; but we heard a voice call out, "Lads, have ye aught to eat?" When we had answered, "No," the voice replied, "Cast the net on the right side of the boat, and ye shall find." When we had so done we were not able to draw it for the multitude of fishes.

While Peter was tugging at the net my heart leaped in my breast with sudden joy. "Peter, it is the Lord!" said I. He raised himself and peered shoreward a moment. Then, seizing his coat—for he was bared as was his wont, caring naught for cold now—he leaped into the water and made for the beach. The rest of us came in the little boat, dragging the net.

There was a fire of coals on the white pebbles, and as it burned up we saw the beach brightened by its light.

“Bring of the fish which ye have now taken,” the dear voice called.

Peter went and drew the net ashore. Quickly we counted the catch — I remember the number still — a hundred and fifty and three. We chose the best to prepare for that breakfast!

Then we gathered around the fire. Fish already laid thereon was lading the air with savor, and bread was near it in the cheerful light. Never did food taste so good as when we ate together then! For our hearts were filled with gladness.

When we had broken our fast the fire's red glow was beginning to pale in the light of dawn, and across the lake, over the Gadarene hills, glimmered the faint flashes of color that herald the coming sun. Oh, then we saw Peter stand once more

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in firelight — stand face to face with a love that would not let him go!

“Simon, son of John,” said the Master, “lovest thou me more than these?”

Peter’s bearded countenance was ruddy with the fire’s shining as he looked up. We all understood that now, around another fire of coals, rose the memory of that night in the courtyard.

“Yea, Lord,” he answered, “Thou knowest that I hold Thee dear.” He did not use the high word for love, the word of exalted devotion used in the Master’s question, but a lowlier one laden with human tenderness. For Peter was always given to choosing words that matched his thoughts to his liking. And he said naught of the words “more than these,” but looked round about on our listening faces, humbling himself at the memory of his boast in the upper room.

We heard the tinkle of a sheep bell

high on the hillside in the dawn's dimness, and the calling voice of the shepherd.

"Feed my lambs," said the low voice beside the fire.

Thrice we heard the question; thrice Peter answered, using the humbler word; and thrice the Master bade him be a shepherd for him. In his gentleness he even used Peter's own word the third time he asked the question, as if to say, "Even though your love is not perfect, if I am dear unto you, go on and do my work, thou man who didst thrice deny me."

Peter bowed his head, pondering in the glow of the fire. Then the voice of our Master went on, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, When thou wast young, thou girdedst thyself and walkedst whither thou wouldest; but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not."

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The voice was mellow with tenderness as those words sounded amid the plashing on the beach; but in the Master's face we saw the look which we were wont to mark when his kingliness awoke to its holy might. A sweet silence, deep as the morning's hush, came in our hearts; for we knew that the noblest man among us was bowing there by the dim coals. I have never doubted that he was mindful of that scene long after when he wrote those words, "Gird yourselves with humility." Ah, how like him it was to unveil this memory in the admonition, "Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time."

While Peter's head was still bowed, "Follow me," said the Master. Then he began to depart from the fire. And Peter turned to follow him.

But even as he turned, he saw me doing likewise; and eager to the

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last he said, "Lord, and what shall this man do?"

"If I will that he tarry till I come," came the gentle reply, "what is that to thee? Follow thou me." And as Peter obeyed, morning's glory broke on the lake and all our hills.

THUS WAS TOLD TO THE END THE STORY OF PETER IN THE FIRELIGHT. THEN POLYCARP ROSE UP, AND REVERENTLY KISSED A SHINING GRAY FACE.

“They say that the blessed Peter, on seeing his wife led to death, rejoiced on account of her summons and conveyance home, and called very encouragingly and comfortingly, addressing her by name, Remember thou the Lord.”

CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA
(*Second Century*)

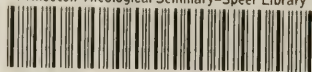
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